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Devoted to the preservation of local history by

MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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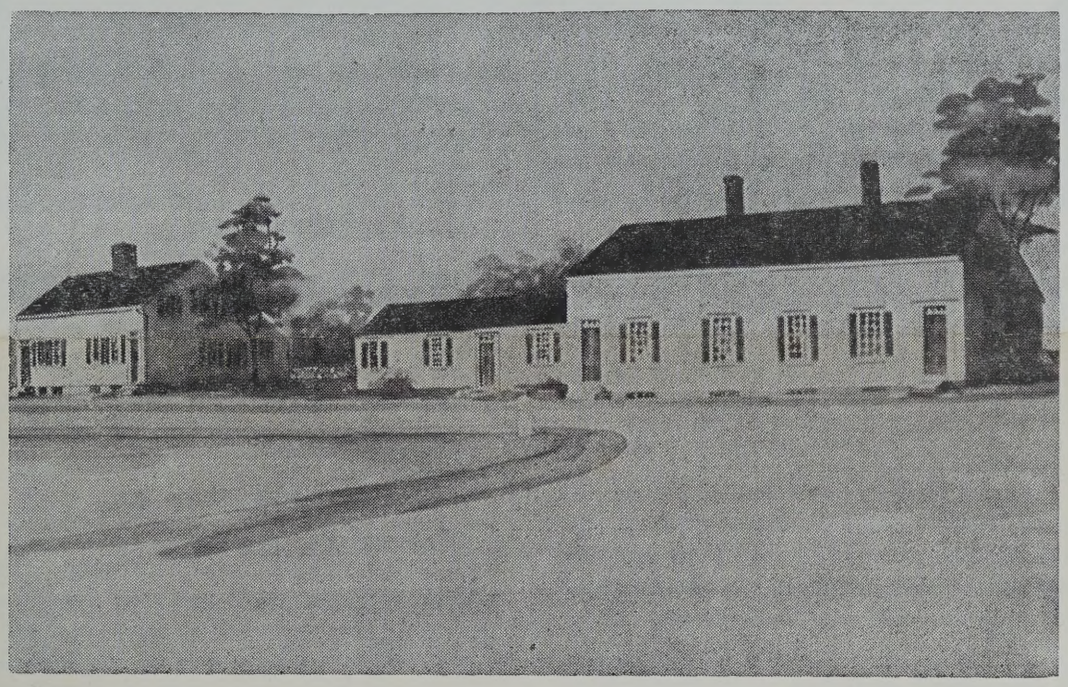


From the Water Color Elevation of the proposed restoration of the Pierce Mill Houses on Jackson Street. (See Page 3)

— 1961 IN REVIEW —

1961 has been, probably, the most eventful year in the history of the Middleborough Historical Association. By action of the Town Meeting in March we acquired title to the two houses on Jackson Street, and the land on which they stand.

In an amazingly short time, one house was completely restored on both the outside and the inside, affording for the first time in our forty years an opportunity to have a museum where many of our valued historical items could be displayed to the public. Very few Historical Associations like ours have been able in so short a time, to accomplish what has been done on Jackson Street.

Our Museum Committee, under the able leadership of Mrs. Mertie Witbeck, the Chairman, has done a really outstanding job, for which every member should be grateful and proud. Many of our members have made valuable contributions of both money and services that have made this achievement possible. Our Curator, Larry Romaine, has spent untold hours in not only planning the work but in just downright hard labor in bringing our Museum into being.

In brief, every one of us who has helped with this important project in any way, has not only been preserving history, but making history. We are each one contributing to creating a strong sense of continuity with our past. This is the sort of thing that justifies our existence as a community and welds us together in a common purpose.

But as our "Museum Mouse" is constantly pointing out, now is no time to be overcome with complacency. There is still so much to be done. During the last few months work has progressed on the outside of the second house. Much volunteer help is needed to complete the inside.

1962 is an important year for us. First of all it is our Fortieth Anniversary. I can think of no better way to celebrate it than to contribute both financially and in labor and skills to finish the job we have so ably started in 1961. Let us all lend a hand.

Harold A. Hall *President*

— 1962 —

The first meeting for 1962 will be held in the Junior High School Musicorium at 8 p.m. Monday the 5th of February. (We hope you have marked this on the calendar when you saw the announcement in the Middleboro Gazette for January 18th—if not please do so now).

After the regular business meeting, Miss Helen Attaquin will entertain us, accompanied by Henry Burkland on the organ. If you have ever heard and seen her in action, you'll be there. After the applause has died down, we hope to not only entertain but educate you with an illustrated audience-commentator hour devoted to Middleborough's Architectural History. We have borrowed the Junior High School's opaque projector for this meeting, and plan to show you photographs and prints collected in the museum through many years. There are a goodly number we can not identify—and that's where you, the captive audience, come in. We hope you will lend a hand in cataloguing the collection while recalling dozens of homes and street scenes progress has completely obliterated.

If you have friends and neighbors who do not belong, and who are perhaps interested in the museum and its future, bring them along—the more the merrier.

MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Report of Progress

The Middleborough Historical Museum Committee is happy to report that progress has indeed been made. One has only to look back at the condition of the houses in October 1960 when the committee was appointed, then look at the buildings as they are today to realize that much HAS been accomplished.

When the committee began work, not one window was intact in either house; broken glass covered every floor; walls, ceilings and woodwork were stained and peeling. Today one building is practically completed, inside and out, and the exterior of the second building has been repaired and renovations begun on the interior.

We will, no doubt, run out of money long before the second building is completed. We appeal to good friends of the Museum who are interested enough to see that this worthy project is carried through to a successful conclusion, to contribute their time, effort and money to the cause. The aim of the committee and of the Association is to make this an educational project as well as a collection of treasures from the past. The very best way to teach for the future is to learn from the past.

It was gratifying to note the interest displayed when the Museum was opened for visitors in the early Fall. Townfolk and many families from out of town came, saw and were enthusiastic in their praise.

We will be confronted with a problem in the Spring when the Museum is again opened to the public (two houses, we hope) in finding people who will serve as hosts and hostesses. It would be very helpful and greatly appreciated if anyone willing to give an occasional Sunday afternoon to this purpose would volunteer their services and give their name to the chairman.

Mertie E. Witbeck,
Chairman, Historical Museum Committee.

MUSEUM FINANCIAL REPORT

Fall 1960 saw the actual start of the long dreamed of museum project. The Association made available to the committee $2400.00 and in the Spring of 1961 added another $100.00. Our first individual contribution was received in October 1960 and to date a total of $2850.00 has been received from individuals interested in making the Historical Museum a reality. Several groups have sponsored money raising projects and donated the proceeds to the Museum. From this source a total of $1900.00 has been received. In August 1961 the Museum Committee held an auction which added another $850.00 to the treasury. An initial goal of $10,000.00 was set and to date $8100.00 has been realized.

Considerable progress has been made in restoring the Jackson Street buildings and our cash outlay for building restoration has hit the $5000.00 mark with a great deal more work yet to be done. In addition, the Tom Thumb loan has been reduced by $900.00.

More than actual dollars has been contributed to the Museum fund—hard work! No actual record is available of the man hours donated by interested persons but it is estimated that more than 3857 hours have gone into the actual building restoration work with no monetary remuneration — only the feeling of being a part of a worthwhile project.

Robert F. Howes,
Treasurer

EXCHANGES AND INTER-ASSOCIATION & SOCIETY RELATIONS

We are pleased to acknowledge with thanks the following publications that have come to us during 1961—we hope they will be continued:

Abington, Mass. Bulletin.

American Association for State and Local History. History News.*

Bay State League. The Bulletin.

Connecticut Historical Society. The Bulletin.

Falmouth Historical Society

Mattapoisett Historical Society

Mystic Seaport. The Log of —.

Nantucket. Historic Nantucket

New Bedford. Old Dartmouth Historical Society. Bulletin.

New York Historical Society Quarterly.

New York Public Library. The Bulletin.

Onondaga Historical Association. (Syracuse, N.Y.) The Bulletin.

Oregon University — The Call Number.

Rhode Island Historical Society. Rhode Island History.

Scituate Historical Society. Bulletin

Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Old Time New England.

Worcester Historical Society. News Letter.

* If you really want to see what we are doing here, take a look at HISTORY NEWS, September, 1961—Vol. XVI, No. 11.—and please overlook the spelling—we **DO** know better.

Files of all exchanges, as well as inter-society courtesies, notes and comments, will be catalogued and preserved for reference in the new library next to the Pierce Store restoration in the wing of the corner house.

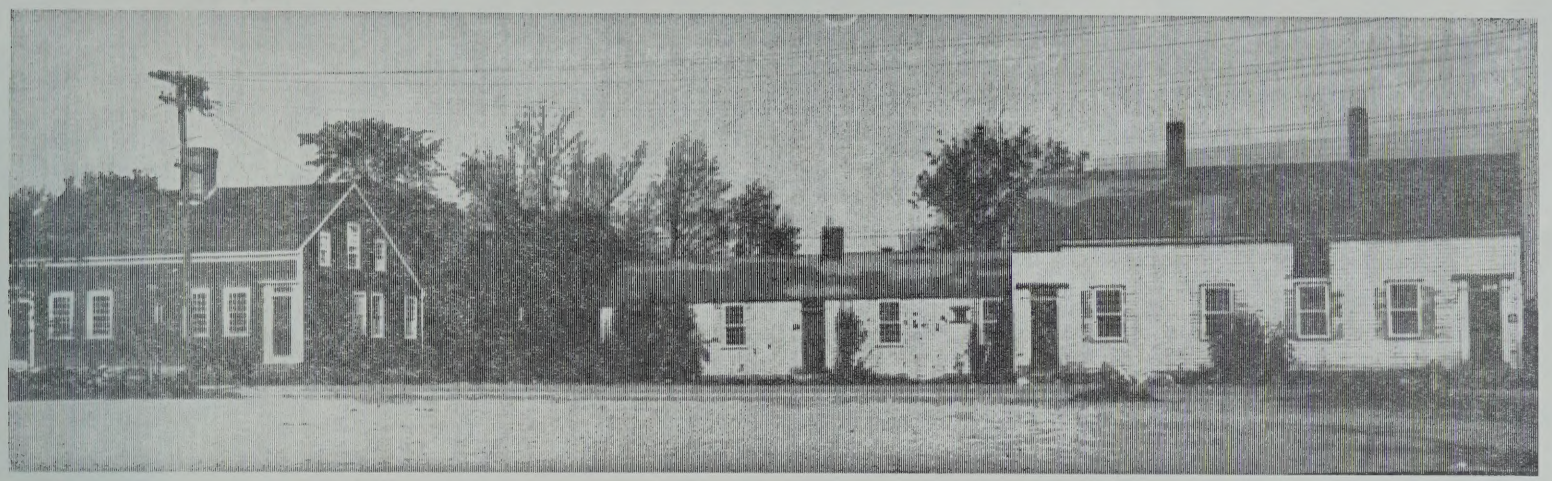
We also acknowledge with thanks the local historical manuscript and printed ephemera presented to us by:

The Braintree Historical Society. Gilbert Bean.

Newton Historical Society (Jackson Homestead). Fred Alexander.

Old Colony Historical Society. W. Wallace Austin.

Onondaga Historical Association. Richard N. Wright.



(Photograph of Jackson Street Restoration in October) (See next Antiquarian—we'll keep you posted.)

TWICE-TOLD TALES OF OLD MIDDLEBOROUGH

No respectable New England town is without its traditions, legends, and characters, and Middleborough is certainly no exception. For example, how many of you remember Dr. Ellis? At night he used to lurk behind the brick wall that surrounded his home (now Deputy Sheriff Wheeler's) and stick one of his claw-like hands over to scare passing women. The cloak he wore added to his eerie appearance. Another of Middleborough's physicians was in the habit of prescribing a celery broth. This was celery boiled in water. The patient got only the water, however; the celery was not included. Being a vegetarian, this was undoubtedly one of the Doctor's favorite dishes, but I wonder if he really cured anyone with it.

Years ago — I think it was about 1904 — Fletcher Barrows drove the first car through town. Old Beckie Parker's white horse nearly shook his master right out of the wagon when he saw it, but that was no wonder because Beckie was so skinny that he looked half starved. (It's possible that his doctor had him on a celery broth diet.) Even though automobiles soon took over, many people still mention the span of pretty white horses George Wood drove.

In the day when everything was done with horses, Tom Sisson supplied horsepower for weddings, funerals, express deliveries, and all other public transportation. One day a hack was harnessed and waiting in front of the Nemasket House to go to the depot for passengers. Kate Robinson happened along, jumped into the driver's seat, and raced through town cracking the whip in the air and with her billowing skirts flapping and waving in the wind. Once Kate put a sign in her window (now Miles Alden's home) announcing a lost pumpkin-colored cat with orange-colored eyes. Kate was a great one for wandering along the Nemasket with a bucket on her arm gathering water cress, dandelion greens, and other delectable wild things that she generously distributed among the neighbors.

Kate was only one of the town's most remembered characters though. How many of you can remember Sloppy Weather? She lived down behind the electric light plant. Then there was a certain member of the clergy who would leave for Boston after Sunday services and come back that night so crocked he could barely walk. And there was a local tailor who lived in the center that is remembered for knocking on his window and giving pennies to children for doing his errands about town. Then, too, Milton Jones added to local color in those days with his peg leg as did Adolph Roht with his hunch back and glass eye.

There's a story of a LeBaron boy that lived in town years and years ago who used to trap flies in his inkwell at school. When he got a fist full of them he put the whole business in his mouth and let them out one at a time repulsing the girls in his class and probably some of the boys too.

The eve of July fourth used to be a big time in town years back. The streets were packed so with people that night that a person had a hard time just going from the center of town up to Pastor and Klar's for ice cream. One year Everett Lincoln got shot and the black marks from the powder could always be seen on his face. Another time someone set a wagon afire and a bunch of boys ran pulling it into the four corners where they celebrated with a bonfire. And once a group of boys (maybe the same ones?) with the fourth of July spirit threw Tom Curley in the river. I wonder how his spirit was when he finally waded ashore?

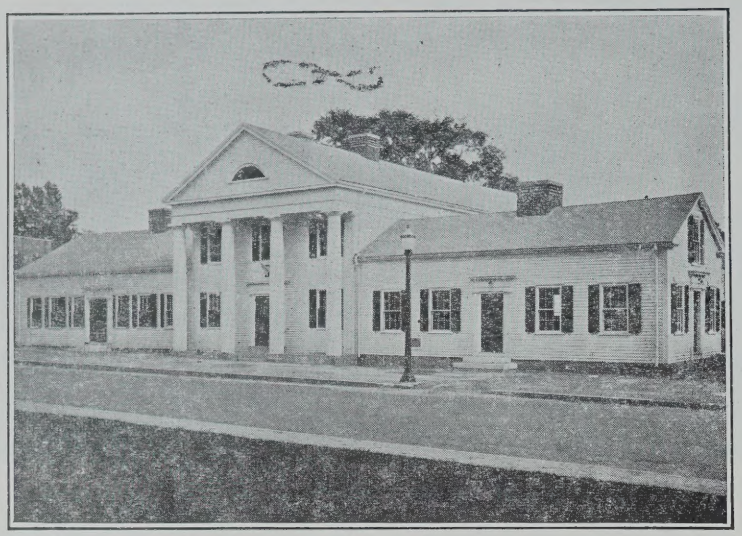
In 1906 when Jones Brothers furniture company burned, the folks in the Nemasket House across the way put clothes and other things in trucks and made ready for a fast exit. The hot flames only licked the front of the hostelry, but buildings as far away as Everett Lincoln's barn were damaged. The next morning after the fire Wareham Street was a glare of ice—the furniture store was a total ruin.

In the same building as the furniture store, Washburn, the undertaker, kept caskets. It was in one of these that some boys put Adolph Roht when they found him plastered. Imagine how he felt when he awoke with a bouquet of flowers stuck in his hand! The same fellows used to put buckets of water over doors to drench him. He was so short he had to use hands and knees to get into even the small chairs at the hotel. Once he had managed to tuck his legs under him, he'd lean his head back and fall asleep with his glass eye staring coldly into the air. One day a couple who were passing through town asked to rent the cheapest room for the night. The chamber maid knew the small windowless room had just been made up and took them there. Who do you suppose was curled up on the freshly made bed smelling of liquor stronger than a barn smells of horse?

On cold winter days the laundry would be hung way up in the hotel's attic. You could stand in the hall on the first floor and look straight up and see the sheets waving and drying. And remember the coon suppers at the hotel?

It's stories, characters, and memories like these that will all be lost in another generation if the older citizens won't write them down and pass them on. Why not jot some interesting recollections down and send them in for the next Antiquarian? These whimsical local color stories are what make history so enjoyable and readable too!

R. S. T. *Secretary*



Speaking of restorations, the architecture of the Pierce Store still lives in our Court House and Police Station—NOW—the interior will be brought back to life in the wing of our corner house.

JAMES FREDERICK SHURTLEFF, M.D.

James Frederick Shurtleff was born January 9, 1842 in Carver, Mass. He was one of ten children born to Seth and Mercie (Gibbs) Shurtleff.

At the age of nineteen he enlisted for three years in the Civil War. He served as a Private in the 18th Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and saw action in the battles of Bull Run, Big Bethel, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Pittsburg Landing. The date of his enlistment was November 22, 1861; he was discharged on September 2, 1864. (See p. 367, Vol. 2, Mass. Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the Civil War.)

At the close of the War he entered Physicians College in Albany, New York. Immediately after graduating he settled in Middleborough, succeeding Doctor Snow. Until his death forty-seven years later he was a general practitioner with many patients in Rochester, Carver, Lakeville, Middleborough, and other surrounding villages and towns.

Doctor Shurtleff was considered excellent in cases of fevers and pneumonia, and he brought many of us into the world. He could be depended on, day or night. Several times he was called upon to perform surgery. For instance, the writer had a schoolmate who had been given a gun for Christmas. The boy, who was in his teens at the time, didn't realize the gun was loaded, pointed it at his foot, and pulled the trigger. The blast shattered the boy's toe joint. When the Doctor arrived he cleaned the wound, dressed it, and sent the youth to the Massachusetts General Hospital. Upon his arrival the surgeons asked who had done such a remarkable piece of work; the wound, they said, had been well cleaned of the gun powder. Although the boy always walked a bit lame, his foot had been saved. It was said that Dr. Shurtleff had learned to do this emergency work during the Civil War.

The Doctor's means of transportation was horse and buggy. This writer remembers well seeing him come to our home or driving along the country roads. He always drove a Goddard buggy. This was a low hung vehicle, which was easy to get in and out of. His animals were always well cared for and in excellent condition. In stormy weather the Doctor used a "boot" to protect himself from the rain and snow. This was a large piece of water-proofed leather extending from the dashboard up to a section of the buggy frame where it buttoned. The "boot" was fastened in such a place that the driver might see over it; the reins were passed through slots provided for them. Any person using one of these would be well wrapped in the robes beneath, thus being well protected from the elements.

The Doctor was a quiet, home-loving man. Although he did serve on the School Committee for nine years (1874-1883), he never sought any other public office. With his family he was a regular attendant at the Third Calvinistic Baptist Church, which was located on Highland Street.

Dr. Shurtleff was married three times. His first wife, Eleanor Churchill Harlow, a native of New Bedford, was the mother of his three eldest children. She died in Middleborough on October 6, 1879. His second wife was Celestia Abby Harrington of Rochester, New York. She was the mother of his fourth child; she died in Middleborough on January 8, 1883. His third wife, Marry Ellen Kingman Harlow, was a sister of his first wife; she survived him several years.

His children were (1) Lucretia Bartlett, who married Alvin E. Thomas of South Middleborough. Their daughter, Eleanor Harlow Thomas, was a local teacher. (2) Alfred Harlow, who married Miss Lottie Ashley of Freetown, Mass. They were the parents of Dorothy, Hilda, James Frederick, and Merrill. (This James Frederick Shurtleff was a former Selectman in Middleborough.) (3) Jennie Gordon, who married Chester Smith of South Middleborough. They were the parents of Gordon W., who is presently a Professor at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, Ruth Alice, and Doris Anna. (4) Lettie Eleanor, who married Lucius Harrison Raymond of Middleborough. They are survived by a daughter.

At the age of seventy-two Doctor Shurtleff passed away at his home on Highland Street. Rev. Millard F. Johnson of the Baptist Church, which the Doctor had faithfully attended for many years, officiated at the funeral in the Doctor's home. Among the mourners were Civil War Veterans and several physicians. The burial was in the family lot at the Rock with his three sons-in-law and his son serving as bearers.

Those of us that the Doctor served faithfully for so many years hold him in loving memory, not only as a physician, but as a true friend as well.

Susan B. Brackett

Lawrence B. Romaine — *Editor*

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